

Reigniting the Relationship between Open Communication Climate and Employee Commitment among Lecturers in Private Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between open communication climate and employee commitment among lecturers in private universities in Anambra State Nigeria. This study used survey research design. The study population from which the sample was drawn for the study consists of all private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Target respondents were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The sample size of the study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula, thus a sample size of three hundred and eighty four (384) were employed. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire structure along Likert Scale five point format. The research instrument was validated using face and content validity while the reliability was measured using Split Half technique. The inferential statistical tool used was Pearson correlation analysis for testing the hypothesis. The study found that high level of open communication climate leads to greater level of commitment among private university lecturers. It explains that lecturers would do extra job and avoid personal gains if they enjoy a climate of open communication from their university management. Thus, this study concludes that open communication climate plays a vital role in every organization, as it decides whether employees are committed or not in the workplace. This study recommends that management of private universities should openly communicate the strategic intentions of their various universities through different medium and make lecturers contribute their ideas for better implementation.

Key words: Open Communication Climate, Employee Commitment, Human Capital, Positive Climate, Workplace

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are formed for different purposes; they have different visions and missions. Some are formed to offer services, while others are instituted to produce goods. Central to their optimal functioning and survival are resources. There are two main forms of resources; capital resources and human resources. However, researchers, experts and scholars seem to have come to a conclusion that Human Resources (HR), also called Human Capital (HC), is the most critical of all resources at the disposal of organizations. This position is supported by Nabilla and Riyanto (2020) as they aver that HR is one of the most essential assets of every organization as the success of organizations depends on them. Gosain and Sinha (2021) opines that an effective workforce and employee base is an asset for an organization as well as its integral part for organizations to achieve their objectives, human resources need perform well. Correspondingly, the various activities and social interactions or climate that will result in group goal achievement depend on a system of communication among the group.

Communication is critical to a leader's success, and ineffective leader communication leads to problems in many organizations. Ameh and Odusami (2014), noted that communication is one of the most important leadership skills, and it allows for the achievement of personal and organizational goals. In fact, open communication is essential for employee motivation for better performance and increased commitment (Al-Laymoun, 2017). Thus, a leader's ability to exchange messages, information, opinions, or thoughts with employees contributes to organizational success. Some leaders lack effective communication skills, and leader communication is a factor essential to employee commitment. The way that a leader communicates with employees affects organizational behaviour (Rabie and Malek, 2020). Therefore, researchers should explore open communication climate that could engender organizational behaviour and improve employee commitment. Leaders need a better understanding of the climate necessary to communicate effectively with employees to improve the commitment of their workers so that their behaviour in the organization could

positively geared. Lack of open communication is one of the leading causes of ineffective leadership and non-commitment of employees in the universities. From a global perspective, Begum and Mujtaba (2016) indicated that lack of open communication was the primary reason 40% of employees from diverse industries lack commitment.

Employee commitment has to do with the level of loyalty and identification an employee has for the organization he is working for. It is that which makes an employee to give the best to ensure that the organization performs well (Okoli, Okeke and Nuel-Okoli, 2017). A committed employee is the one who stays with the organization through thick and thin, attends work regularly, puts in a full day, protects company's assets and shares company goals (Chen, Jiang and Riley, 2009). Okoli, Nwakoby and Ihediwa (2020) opined that employees with strong commitment to an organization work harder at their jobs and perform them better than do those with weak commitment. Uzundu, Aloh and Okafor (2014) posit that committed employees who are highly motivated to contribute their time and energy to the pursuit of organisational goals are increasingly acknowledged to be the primary asset available to an organisation. An open communication that is not well managed could result to a deflated commitment from the employee.

Like other organizations, private universities have long recognized human capital as a competitive advantage for their effectiveness. Where there is effective communication amongst these most critical organization resource, there are usually commitment of the staff, which leads to an effective organization with high level of output. Thus, there seems that most of the employees are not committed to their work with many of them expressing a strong desire to leave if they happen to get employment elsewhere, claiming that they stand nothing to lose if they left the university and demonstrating low signs of commitment to the university and many other expressions of discontent. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the nexus between open communication climate and employee commitment among lecturers in private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Communication refers to the manager's ability to listen to staff, share information, and clarify misunderstandings (Okoli, et al., 2020; Castro, 2008). Communication in an organisation according to Yee and Ananthalakshmi (2017) can be seen as accessibility of the supervisor for listening and guidance, effective communication, and clear expectations and feedback that is needed for better work performance. Therefore, some communication is effective while some are not. Open communication climate therefore is the way information is shared in an organization forms part of the climate of an organization. Some organizations are known for being open and transparent when it comes to communication and informing people about what they need to know and what they need to do in order to grow, while some firms are notorious for keeping people at the dark with respect with what is being planned to be done, what is being done and what is expected of an employee to grow (Okeke, Okoli, & Nuel-Okoli, 2022). The climate of communication in organizations involves trust, openness, information adequacy, information quality, information flow, participative management and strengthening of good communication practices as well as shared responsibilities for making communication effective (Ijaduola, 2008).

Positive climate creates trust and openness between the university management and the staff through effective communication that results to feedback. Thus, open or close style of information flow in the organization differentiates the climate of one organisation from another organization. Moynihan & Pandey (2008) found a positive association between feelings of open communication and climate within the organization. Open communication climate develops and maintains the vision and facilitates the process of decision making participation that results in organizational success. The effectiveness of communication climate can be instrumental in the improvement of workgroups, group coherence, and energizes the work teams (Okoli, et al., 2020). Effective communication climate is a result of an intentional effort on the part of the management and staff. Open communication climate in an organization is that which achieves the desired goals, which include right response, aversion of danger, positive feedback, proper work attitude and overall improvement in performance. For a communication climate to be termed harmonious, it must be timely, open and accessible to everyone. This, therefore, brings to the fore the construct of open communication, which stands for letting people know what they are supposed to know.

Employee commitment is the loyalty and attachment that employees have in an organization and is associated with their feelings about the institution. It implies the dedication of employees and the willingness to make an effort on behalf of an organization (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). Employee commitment refers to a person's mindset and attachment to their organization. Organisation need committed employees effectively and efficiently so that they can achieve their objectives (Ihionkhan and Aigbomian, 2014), this can only be possible with open communication climate. Commitment, in the viewpoint of university, is a long-term desire to stay connected to the organization as well as a pleasant feelings disposition toward their workplace. Staff receiving assistance from their employer are obliged to put everything into their employment, which causes them to feel more devoted to the organization. An urge to continue one's affiliation with an organization is

influenced by open communication experience. So, commitment emerges as a result of workplace experiences that are aligned with staff values and meet staff's needs (Albdour and Ikhlas, 2014). Employees' commitment to their organization is strengthened by open communication, which reduces the possibility that they may explore for other employment prospects beyond their organization (Sadia et al., 2016). Organizations are significant contributors in improving how individuals of these universities view their connection with their employers by satisfying the communication demands of staff. Empirically, Tamunomiebi (2019) examines the relationship between organizational climate and employee commitment in telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt. The study found that organizational climate significantly influences employee commitment in telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt. Kiiza & Picho (2015) investigates the relationship between effective communication and staff commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali – Rwanda and found that effective communication is positively correlated with staff commitment; whenever employers are effective in communication, staff are likely to be more committed. Okoli, et al. (2020) studies the effect of organizational climate on employee's affective commitment among lecturers in selected private tertiary institutions in Anambra State Nigeria. The study found that climate were significant, implying that they predict employee affective commitment in the tertiary institutions. Jan Kakakhel, Khan, Gul, & Jehangir (2015) studied how organizational communication affects employee job satisfaction level and the level of commitment with their organization, and also measure the moderating impact of physical work conditions on the organizational communication, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The research found that organizational communication positively relates with employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The research further proves that the physical work environment as moderator weakens the relationship between communication, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Based on these discussions, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₁: There is no significant relationship between open communication climate and employee commitment among lecturers in private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

METHODS

This study adopted a survey research design because of the way the study is structured and how data can be elicited for the study. The study population from which the sample was drawn for the study consists of private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Respondents were selected using the-non probability convenience sampling technique. The convenience sampling technique was used because it was difficult to access all the respondents at the selected companies at the same time. The sample size of the study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula; so three hundred and eighty four (384) was reached as a sample size. Data for the study was used using self-designed questionnaire structure along Likert Scale five point format. The coding used are: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3) and disagree (2) and strongly agree (1). The instrument was validated using face and content validity while the reliability was measured using Spearman Brown Split Half Technique. 384 copies of questionnaire were distributed proportionately using Bowley's proportionate allocation formula. 380 copies of questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed for the study. The analysis was done using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The study made use of 5% (.05) level of significance and this guided the decision. The research hypothesis will be accepted if the probability value (p-value) obtained is less than .05 (p-value < 0.05), otherwise, the research hypothesis will be rejected (p-value > 0.05).

STATISTICAL TEST AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The inferential statistical tool used was Pearson correlation analysis. This was used to find out the extent of relationship between open communication climate and employee commitment.

H₁: There is no significant relationship between open communication climate and employee commitment among lecturers in private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Test of Significance of Pearson's Correlation between open communication climate and employee commitment.

Correlations			
		Open Communication	Employee Commitment
Open Communication Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	.627**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	380	380
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.627**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	380	380

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From table 1, the nature of relationship between open communication climate and employee commitment was examined using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The research indicated a strong, positive relationship between open communication climate and employee commitment among lecturers of private universities, $r = .63$, $n = 380$, $p < 0.01$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The research established that open communication climate has statistical, significant relationship with employee commitment. This implies that high level of open communication climate leads to greater level of commitment among private university lecturers. It explains that lecturers would do extra job and avoid personal gains if they enjoyed open communication from their university management. The result is in line with previous studies (Okoli, et al. 2020; Tamunomiebi, 2019; Kiiza & Picho, 2015). Tamunomiebi (2019) found that organizational climate significantly influences employee commitment in telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt. Okoli, et al. (2020) also found that climate predicts employee affective commitment in the tertiary institutions in Anambra State Nigeria. Similarly, Kiiza & Picho (2015) found that effective communication is positively correlated with staff commitment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this study was to explore the influence of open communication climate on employee commitment among lecturers of private universities in Anambra State Nigeria. Open communication climate plays a vital role in every organization, as it decides whether employees are committed or not in the workplace. Fostering employee commitment is also necessary for the organization to deliver high-quality service. In this regard, the study concluded that universities can seek ways to enhance employee commitment through open communication climate.

Sequel to the findings and conclusion that open communication climate is significant and positively correlated with lecturers' commitment in private universities in Anambra State Nigeria; hence, it requires that management of private universities should improve on communication if lecturers' commitment is to improve to give its share, in employee commitment. Also, management of private universities should openly communicate the strategic intentions of their various universities through different media (internet, memos, circulars etc.) and make lecturers contribute their ideas for better implementation.

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